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BACKGROUND--SOVIET CROP PROSPECTS

- I. Recent and seemingly conflicting press reports have stated that:
 - A. The USSR is having a bumper agricultural year and,
 - B. The USSR will suffer staggering crop losses in this year's harvest, because of bad weather and poor planning.
- II. The facts in the matter are these:
 - A. This year's growing season in the USSR was reasonably good in the Ukraine and excellent in the New Lands. This favorable weather, taken together with general acreage expansion and near-completion of the corn-planting program, has resulted in a bumper crop in the fields.

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III. Counterbalancing this is the usual loss to be expected between the total grain in the fields and the amount that will be safely harvested and stored.

- A. Harvesting losses, so-called, are abnormally large during the gathering of unusually large grain crops.
- B. Nonetheless, barring other factors, the so-called "barn yield" for the USSR's 1956 grain crop--that is, the grain actually harvested and stored in safety--could come to as much as 124 million metric tons (compared with a post-war high in '55 of 103 million MT, and a pre-war high of 105 million MT).

IV. Thus, the remaining crucial factors in garnering this bumper crop successfully are:

- A. Harvesting weather for the next few weeks in the New Lands area and in the northern European USSR (the Ukraine wheat harvest has already been nearly completed);
- B. Adequacy of storage, drying and transportation facilities in the New Lands area.

V. We estimate that, if reported poor weather in the New Lands area takes only a moderate toll, this year's Soviet grain harvest should stand at some 120 million metric tons.

- A. Even under the worst possible harvesting circumstances, we estimate that the Soviet crop will be larger than 1955's 103 million MT, and probably equal to the previous (1937) all-time high.